

Robert A. Pinkerton's Solution of a \$40,000 Robbery

Passion for Gaming Table Turns Promising Master Mechanic Into a King of Crooks

By GEORGE BARTON

More than three thousand men, women and children residents of Susquehanna, Pa., put under surveillance in connection with big theft.

Robert A. Pinkerton was born in Dunlap, Illinois, in 1848, and educated at Notre Dame university in Indiana. He was the son of Allan Pinkerton, the founder of the famous detective agency. "Bob" Pinkerton, as he was familiarly called, had a marvelous memory for names and faces, and his gallery of criminal photographs and biographies was supposed to be the finest in America. He made a big reputation by his method of handling great crowds at the race tracks. He was a man of pleasing personality and did much toward introducing purely business systems into a concern which was regarded as rather romantic. He died August 12, 1907, aboard the North German Lloyd steamer "Bremen" while bound for Europe.

One morning before daylight the United States Express company was robbed of \$40,000, and, sad to say, there was not a shred of evidence to tell the story of how this small fortune was permitted to slip from the grasp of a corporation that had the reputation of being one of the most careful and conservative in America. The scene of the robbery was at Susquehanna, Pa., and the local authorities did everything in their power to locate the cash, but all to no avail.

In this emergency the company enlisted the services of Robert A. Pinkerton. It is probable that no detective in the world was better equipped to grapple with a problem of this kind than "Bob Pinkerton." He had the experience of a lifetime in following the trail of this particular character, and although his adventures were little known to the public at large, he enjoyed the reputation of more success than any other man in the agency.

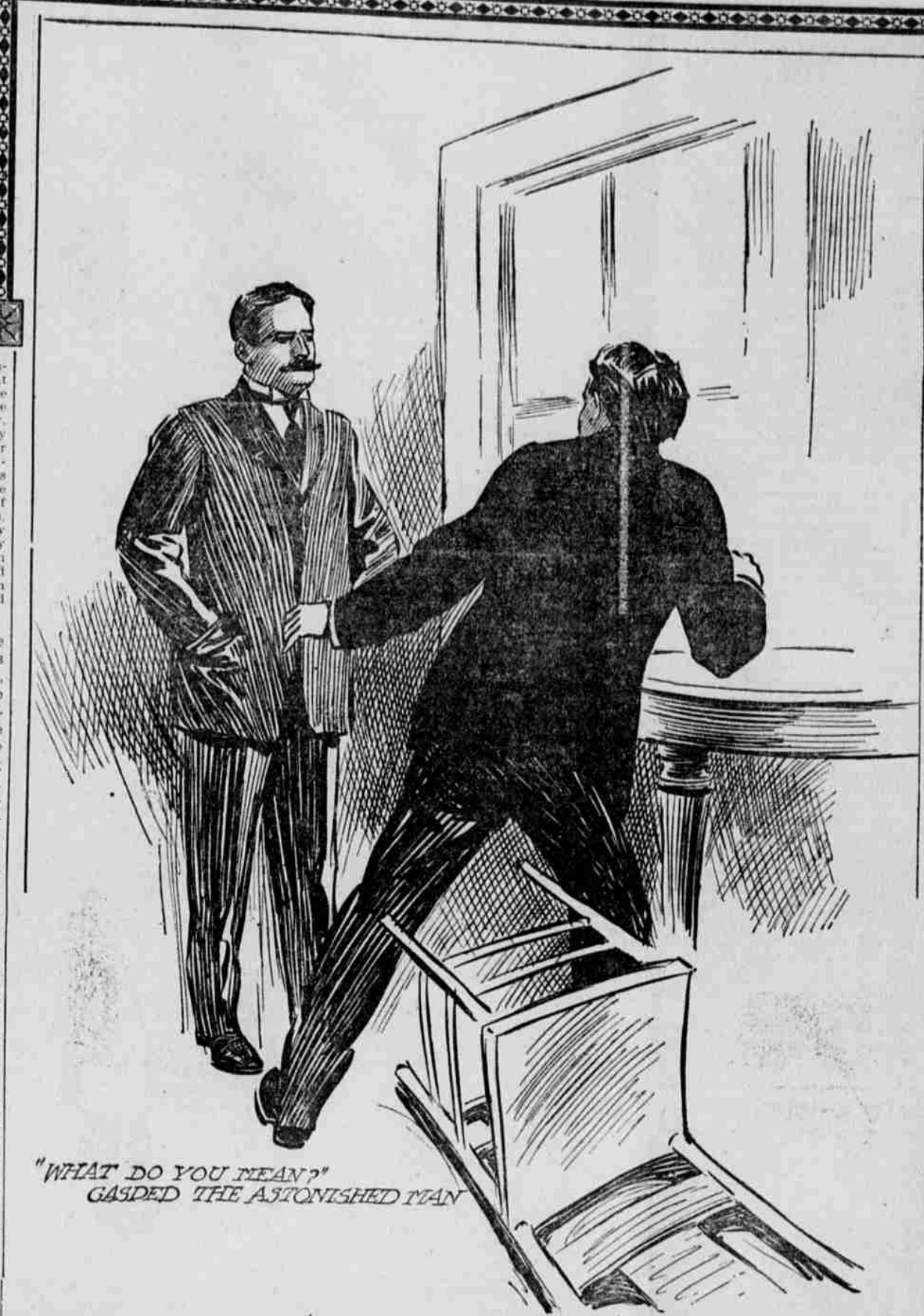
On June 20, 1883, the Marine National bank of New York sent to the First National bank of Susquehanna a sealed package containing \$40,000 in currency and national bank notes. The money was to be used in the payment of wages of more than 1,000 employees of the Erie Railroad company in the local shops. The package was carried to the United States Express company's office in New York by a clerk of the Marine bank who received a receipt for it. The money clerk of the express company took charge of the cash and inclosed it in the regular canvas pouch, sealed with the company's stamp and attached a tag on which was the name of the company's agent at Susquehanna.

The pouch was duly delivered to Messenger Van Wageningen, who placed it in the safe with other valuables. It was midnight when it reached Susquehanna and he turned the expensive package over to Dwight Chamberlain, a night clerk and watchman, who was jointly employed by the express company and the Erie Railroad company. Chamberlain placed it in the safe in the ticket office and locked it with a key which he carried in his pocket. After that he was busily employed in his usual duties about the station, frequently being away from the ticket office until seven o'clock on the morning of the 21st.

While casting up his accounts the messenger from the Susquehanna bank arrived and called for the sealed package. The pouch was taken from the safe, but instead of the \$40,000 in cash, a number of small packages of brown manilla paper, cut about the size of bank bills, were found in the receptacle.

This being the case, either Chamberlain, the night clerk, one of the employees, or some other person, was guilty. Chamberlain was subjected to a rigid cross-examination, and at its conclusion Mr. Pinkerton expressed the belief that he was entirely innocent of any complicity in the theft. A careful watch was kept on all of the employees of the company brought no developments.

At this stage of the game the detective broadened the line of his inquiry so as to include every man, woman and child in the town of Susquehanna. Some instinctive feeling—probably the result of his long years of experience—made him believe that the crime had originated in the little town in Pennsylvania. After learning as much as possible about the personal history of the inhabitants, he began



"WHAT DO YOU MEAN?" GASPED THE ASTONISHED MAN

the process of elimination, dropping out names of all those to whom he was morally convinced on suspicion could be attached. Then he ascertained the names of all persons who had left the town within the preceding 12 months, and as a result of this learned that George H. Proctor, the foreman of the boiler shops of the Erie Railroad company, had gone to Buffalo about a month after the robbery. This was a rich lead and the detective followed it up with great eagerness. He located Proctor in Buffalo without any difficulty and learned that the man was engaged in speculating in oil, and that he had made considerable profit from that occupation.

The man came in the course of a few weeks, and Pinkerton, who had assumed an alias, casually found an opportunity of having himself presented to Proctor. He invited him out for a stroll and finally suggested that they go to his room at the hotel and smoke a cigar. Once there, the detective turned to Proctor and said sharply:

"It's no use, Proctor, the game is up."

"What do you mean?" gasped the astonished man.

"I mean that my name is Robert Pinkerton, and that I have all the facts in the safe robbery."

"You have!" exclaimed the other.

"I have," was the response, "and the sooner we close it out the better."

After this Proctor threw off all reserve and admitted his guilt. He said, however, that he had been the tool of two men named Martin and Collins, who were now in Canada. They had given him \$11,000 as his share of the booty which he had placed in a glass jar and buried it in the yard of his house, leaving it there until his removal to Buffalo. Pinkerton believed this story and arranged to permit Proctor to go at liberty, determining to hold him as a witness for the prosecution and also as a decoy to bring Collins and Martin from Canada where they had gone to be beyond the reach of the American law. Proctor was allowed to remain at his home in Susquehanna, pledging himself to keep Pinkerton's agency constantly informed of his movements. One morning, however, he broke his parole without warning.

Much chagrined at the mistake he had made in the character of Proctor, Pinkerton set about to recapture the three robbers. His first step was to put out a rumor that the trio were being sought by the police for a burglary committed in Canada. On hearing this, Martin, Collins and Proctor purchased tickets to Portland, from whence they had taken passage by telegram on a steamer scheduled for London. Pinkerton was informed of this through the various agencies at his control and stationed himself at Island Pond, a point in Vermont where the Grand Trunk railroad crosses the line into the United States. He boarded the train and interviewed the conductor, who told him that Martin and Collins, evidently suspecting trouble, had jumped from the train during a temporary slow-down on the Canadian side. He said, however, that the third man was still in his berth.

"That is enough," said Pinkerton, and he started for the berth where Proctor was sleeping. Pushing his hand in, he shook the man roughly. "What is it?" was the sleepy response. "Time to get up," said the detective, "hurry." Proctor jumped out of bed and stood in the passageway of the car rubbing his eyes with his fist. "I want you on a matter of great importance, Mr. Proctor." As soon as he heard his voice, Proctor recognized the detective. He smiled grimly and said: "All right. I guess the jig's up." And the jig was up.

In the trial that ensued the full details of the crime became known.

About a year before the robbery Proctor secured employment in the boiler shops of the Erie Railroad company at Susquehanna. In six months his superior skill made him foreman of the shops. In this position he learned that the money used to pay the employees was brought from New York city, and that it was frequently kept in the safe of the express company for 48 hours before being paid to the men. He next discovered who carried the keys of the safe and learned that the agent of the express company at Susquehanna and two of the clerks each had a key. His affable manner soon made him a warm friend of the three men. One day, while in the shops, Proctor asked one of these clerks to loan him his keys in order to unlock his tool chest. Innocently the man handed Proctor his bunch of keys. They walked together towards the tool chest. Proctor easily picked out the safe key as he walked along. He had a small piece of white paper in his hand, and while he conversed with the clerk he rubbed the key tightly on the soft paper. The impression was perfect. It was all Proctor needed. That night before going to bed he had a key exactly like the safe key on the clerk's bunch—such is the expertness of "fitters" in the burglar's world. Before morning he had a plan of all the details of the robbery. He did not deem it safe to attempt the enterprise alone, so he secured the aid of the two Canadians, named Collins and Martin. At the time they were living near the Suspension bridge.

Proctor now found that the pouch containing the \$40,000 would leave New York city at six o'clock in the evening on June 20. The train arrived in Susquehanna at three o'clock in the morning. In 60 minutes the pouch had been put in the safe by the agent and taken out by the conspirators. The bogus bag and seal had already been prepared and as soon as the genuine pouch was taken out the other was put in its place.

Thief George H. Proctor, a wit, skilled musician, foreman in boiler shops and athlete, succumbs to great detective's marvelous powers of reasoning.

The substitution took place while the agent was busily engaged in the way-bill department of the station at four o'clock in the morning. The agent was out of ear-shot at the time Martin opened the safe with the key that Proctor had made and took the bag containing the money. The substitute was put in its place and the safe locked, and in ten minutes' time Collins and Martin, carrying a valise with the \$40,000, took a train for Corning, N. Y.; from thence they went to Schenectady, and then to Suspension bridge, where Proctor was waiting for them. The object of this circuitous journey was to throw anyone off the trail in case they were followed. At Suspension bridge the three conspirators met and divided their loot. Proctor received \$13,000 as his share of the booty, and calmly returned to Susquehanna, and, putting on his overalls and working clothes, resumed his employment in the boiler shops.

Robert Pinkerton was much chagrined to think that Proctor had been able to hoodwink him in the early part of the affair. Instead of being an innocent accomplice, he was a professional burglar with a checkered career. Proctor, when he began the serious part of his life, was a first-class mechanic and at an early age became the foreman of the Portland boiler works. The passion for gambling caused him to lose his position, and in a few years he had joined a group of eastern burglars, acting for them as a "fitter" in opening safes. In the Centennial year, after he was convicted of a safe robbery in Lowell, he was sent to the Massachusetts state prison at Charlestown for four years. He became organizer of the prison and had unusual privileges. As a result he became acquainted with Charles Bullard, a fellow convict, who was serving a 20-year term for breaking into the Boylston bank, Boston, and together they conceived a plan of escape. Proctor made impressions of the cell door keys and made keys out of old knives. From time to time he gathered enough clothes to be used by himself and Bullard when their plans of escape had fully ripened. The clothes in the meantime were deftly hid in the top of the organ. One eventful night Proctor, Bullard and seven other long-term convicts escaped. Proctor and Bullard went to Canada by way of New York. In Toronto they robbed the ticket office of the Grand Trunk Railway company at Brockville of \$3,000. A few days later they robbed another ticket office near Quebec of \$4,000. After that Proctor got work in the Toronto safe works, and after awhile was promoted to a traveling salesmanship. When he sold a safe he arranged the combination, and Bullard would follow him a little later and rob the safe. The suspicion of the safe company eventually caused his dismissal.

On another occasion Proctor attempted to break jail but did not meet with his usual success. He pried the bars off the cell door, but when he reached the corridor the sheriff stopped him at the point of the pistol. As a result of this he was sentenced to eight years' solitary confinement, part of this for his original offense and two years for attempting to break jail. A week after this pieces of paper were found on the floor of his cell bearing the impressions of the key of his cell door, the corridor door, and the door leading to the street. It was after he had served this sentence that he went to Susquehanna and lived as an honest man until the opportunity came for him to take part in the great safe robbery.

The "King of Burglars," as Proctor was called, was given a long sentence for the Susquehanna express robbery at hard labor in the Eastern penitentiary at Philadelphia. His accomplices, as far as known, were never captured.

Soldiers Live on Nuts.
The Somali soldier keeps himself in perfect fighting condition on a diet of nuts. He eats only 20 a day, but they are of a very nourishing kind.

FOR GOOD MUSHROOM CATSUP.

To Pulp of Vegetable Must Be Added Wine or Vinegar.

Choose fully developed mushrooms, rejecting the stems. Thoroughly wash them, singly, in cold water; peel, drain, chop coarsely, and scatter salt evenly through them in layers, a level tablespoon of salt to every quart, measured after chopping. Set them upon ice or in a cool place for 24 hours. Next put them in a preserving kettle, simmer for 15 minutes, rub through a puree sieve, measure, and to each pint of this pulp allow one-half pint of port wine and a dozen, each, of black peppercorns and cloves, and a level tablespoon of white mustard seed.

Tie these, with two or three blades of mace and a bit of horseradish root, in a piece of cheesecloth and simmer in a little of the wine for 15 minutes, adding a little water as it boils away, to keep up the original quantity. Add to this the rest of the wine and the pulp, simmer five minutes more, and seal boiling hot, using self-sealing pint jars.

If a clear catsup is desired, strain it when done through a jelly bag, squeezing well to extract all the liquid; reheat to the boiling point and seal. The unstrained contains more substance. Fine with game. A tablespoonful adds a delightful flavor to ragouts, meats sauces, and gravies. Pure cider vinegar may be substituted for the wine.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS.

In warm weather put eggs in cold water and they will froth better.

To prevent pastry from burning set a pan of water in the oven while it is baking.

Never try to ice a cake hot and let layer cake get nearly cold before putting together.

Always use lard to grease your cake pans, as the salt in the butter causes it to stick to the pans.

To clean small pearls in jewelry or mother of pearl use whiting and water. Never apply soap, as it dissolves pearl.

Any one who has tried to keep a velvet hat or frock clean does not need to be told it is a dust collector. This trying trait may be turned to account.

A bit of velvet is a fine polish for brass. It quickly removes the dust from woodwork or shoes soiled from walking which do not need reblacking.

To remove old paint wet the place with naphtha, repeating as often as necessary; but frequently one application will dissolve the paint. As soon as it is softened, rub the surface clean.

Making Lemonade.

There is nothing more refreshing on a hot day than a long drink of lemonade, but however anxious the hostess may be to serve this beverage, she very often does not have the necessary ingredients on hand, or she may not like to leave her guests to prepare it. It is just for this reason that the syrup that may be prepared by the following recipe is one of the greatest of household conveniences: Extract the juice from a dozen lemons; grate the rind of six of the lemons and add it to the juice. Let the mixture stand for 12 hours, or over night. In the morning make a thick syrup of granulated sugar and water, using about six pounds of sugar and just as little water as possible, as the syrup must be both thick and smooth. When it has cooled strain the lemon juice into it; bottle in glass, being certain that the taps are secure and air-tight.

To Make Cream Puffs.

In making cream puffs, boil one cup hot water and one-quarter cup of butter till the butter is melted. Take from fire and add one cup of sifted flour in which has been put one teaspoonful of baking powder. Stir until a sort of ball is formed of the dough. Set aside to cool while beating four eggs. Add eggs and beat dough steadily for five minutes. One tablespoonful makes a puff. Bake for 20 minutes in moderate oven. To make the filling use one pint of milk, four tablespoonfuls of sugar, two tablespoonfuls of cornstarch, two eggs. Cook in double boiler until thick. Any flavoring desired may be used.

Brighten Woodwork.

In order to keep furniture and hardwood floors looking bright and new, instead of using dry cloth for dusting, dampen same with furniture polish rub well into the cloth, using just enough to dampen lightly. It will last several days without applying more polish.

For floors make soft flannel bag to slip over end of the broom, tying with string to fasten at top, dampen it with polish same as furniture. This saves lots of hard work and has fine effect.

Cleaning Downy Fowl.

When you have any downy fowl to pick, such as wild or tame ducks, geese, etc., rough pick the fowl while dry, then sprinkle powdered rosin thickly through the down, immerse for a moment in scalding water. This causes the resin to form a crust on the down, which can be picked off in large cakes, leaving the skin white and unbroken. The whole process occupies but a few moments. Those who have never tried this method will be amazed at the result.

Prune Sauce.

Stewed prunes, pitted, spiced with vinegar, cinnamon, and cloves, sweetened and cooked to the right consistency, make a delicious spiced sauce to serve with chicken, turkey or veal.

Whip Cream in Boiler.

Put cream in upper part of double boiler. Place in lower part, which has been filled with cracked ice. Whip with Dover egg beater.